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Report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting. The report describes the progress made over the past year as well as future activities of the Committee. The discussion is organized according to the five areas of work of the Committee, namely: (a) coordination and promotion; (b) methodological development for normative standards and other research; (c) development of databases; (d) implementation and statistical capacity-building; and (e) formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues. The report concludes with points for discussion.

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I. Introduction

1. At its forty-ninth session, held from 6 to 9 March 2018, the Statistical Commission adopted decision 49/110 (see E/2018/24-E/CN.3/2018/37, chap. I, sect. B), in which it:

(a) Expressed its appreciation for the work of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting, as detailed in its report, noted the increased uptake and growing importance of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA),[1] and urged the Committee to scale up its work on the implementation of SEEA;

(b) Requested that the Committee of Experts continue to work on coordinating activities in support of SEEA, making available prominently on its website the super calendar, its work programme and a list of the groups working under the auspices of the Committee and the terms of reference of those groups;

(c) Supported the advancement of the research agenda of the SEEA Central Framework, and requested the Committee to develop compilation material to support implementation in countries and to advance the work on linking SEEA to Tourism Satellite Accounts in support of the measurement of sustainable tourism;

(d) Agreed with the revision process of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, and encouraged countries to contribute financially and in kind to the revision process and to continue to experiment and test ecosystem accounts as input to the revision process;

(e) Stressed the importance of developing global SEEA databases based on existing national or international data sets, whenever possible, reiterated the importance of countries approving the information in the database prior to dissemination, and emphasized the need to strengthen and improve basic statistics in support of SEEA implementation;

(f) Commended the Committee of Experts for its efforts to strengthen capacity-building in countries through increased coordination, e-learning, face-to-face workshops and in-country technical assistance, ensuring that countries' needs are met in an efficient manner, and encouraged the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to expand its support to countries, building upon the successful implementation of the United Nations Development Account project and the experience of the Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project,[2] funded by the European Union;

(g) Noted the clarification provided by the Secretariat with regard to the use of the appropriate energy statistics and balances held in international databases as source data for the compilation of national SEEA energy accounts;

(h) Highlighted that the implementation of SEEA facilitates the breaking up of the silos within the national statistical office and national statistical system, thereby harmonizing concepts, definitions and terminology across the national statistical system;

(i) Noted the strong support for using SEEA in compiling Sustainable Development Goal indicators when relevant, and requested that the Committee of Experts take an active role in the Sustainable Development Goal indicators process in view of the review of the indicators in 2020;

[1] See seea.un.org.

[2] See https://seea.un.org/home/Natural%20Capital%20Accounting.

(j) Took note of the communications strategy, and welcomed the newsletter and the efforts to promote SEEA within the statistical community and to policymakers and other stakeholders;

(k) Requested that oceans statistics be integrated in the work of the revision process of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, and noted the interest of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in taking the lead in this work;

(l) Welcomed the release of SEEA Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the Statistics Division, and encouraged its implementation.

2. The work of the Committee is organized according to five broad areas of work, with members of the Bureau leading the related parts of the programme of work, as agreed in the Committee's terms of reference. The areas of work are: area A. Coordination, led by Statistics Canada; area B. Methodological development for normative standards and other research, divided into two sub-areas: area B1. SEEA Central Framework, led by Statistics Netherlands, and area B2. SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, led by Eurostat; area C. Development of databases, led by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); area D. Implementation and statistical capacity-building, led by Statistics South Africa; and area E. Formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues, led by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

3. The work of the Committee also includes country implementation of the accounts through projects and programmes on environmental-economic accounting, such as the Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project and the World Bank Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services programme.[3]

4. The present report discusses the progress made during the past year and the medium-term programme of work. Points for discussion are presented in section VII.

II. Area A. Coordination

5. The stakeholders of and relevant parties to SEEA come from a variety of fields, both within and outside of the statistical community. Coordination entails ensuring that the various groups and international agencies active in the field of environmental accounting – including methodological development, technical cooperation and development of training, in-country capacity-building and data collection and compilation – work in a harmonized fashion to avoid overlaps of activities. Furthermore, transparent and open communication ensures that all of the relevant stakeholders are informed and have the chance to bring forth contributions and share opportunities.

6. The SEEA website plays an important role in sharing information and upcoming events and initiatives among stakeholders. The Statistics Division has posted on its own website a calendar of international SEEA-related events. The calendar is designed to raise the profile and awareness of those events and ensure participation in them by Committee members. Committee members have submitted upcoming events to the Division for inclusion in the calendar, which is currently live. In addition, team collaboration webpages have been developed to help the members of the Committee work together more efficiently. Webpages have been developed for each area of the Committee, for the revision of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem

[3] See www.wavespartnership.org.

Accounting and for the Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project. Under the latter, the Division also plans to develop a document repository on its new website, which will improve upon the old repository by including, in addition to the accounts, items such as policy-related documents and multimedia, and will be easier to navigate.

7. The working group in the area of coordination has focused on developing an online repository of SEEA training materials, which will eventually be hosted on the website. The materials will be directed towards learners looking to know more about SEEA, as well as trainers looking for SEEA materials to use in national or regional workshops or to make presentations as needs arise. Several organizations answered the call by the Statistics Division to submit training materials for the repository (such as PowerPoint presentations, online modules, workbooks, etc.). The working group is currently developing a classification system for the materials to ensure that users can easily find the types of materials they are looking for. It is also developing a streamlined assessment process to ensure that all posted materials are consistent with SEEA concepts and methodologies. A proposed assessment process is currently being piloted.

8. An ongoing portion of the work programme has been strategic intervention to mainstream the use of SEEA for policy processes, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change and biodiversity. Part of the work for 2019, which will extend into 2020, includes efforts to further integrate SEEA into the Goals process. The use of SEEA was explored in a paper of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators working group on interlinkages of Goals statistics and in a presentation on SEEA, both of which were presented to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group in Stockholm in November 2018. The Committee plans to submit a more detailed, comprehensive document to the Group, which builds on previous papers and efforts, on how SEEA can provide a basis for relevant Goals indicators. That document will be sent to the Group in the course of 2019. Furthermore, the Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project includes a workstream to assess the potential of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting for informing a range of national and international indicator frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. In addition to the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee is also looking at mainstreaming the use of SEEA for biodiversity, with an eye towards the post-2020 biodiversity framework. In November 2018, members of the Committee who are also partners in the Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project participated in a side event during the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, co-hosted by the Statistics Division and the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre and supported by the European Union, on the use of natural capital accounting and SEEA in support of the post-2020 biodiversity framework. In addition, in December 2018, the Committee submitted a paper to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity on how SEEA can be used as a measurement framework for the post-2020 framework.

10. Similarly, the Committee has engaged with the climate change community through the 2019 refinement of the 2006 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. Several members of the Committee participated in the second-order expert review to provide feedback from the statistical community on how national statistical offices and international statistical standards, including the System of National Accounts (SNA) and SEEA, can contribute to the proposed guidelines. In addition, in its meeting in June 2018, the Committee welcomed the proposal for a dual indicator approach developed by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) task force for a set of core climate change-related statistics based on SEEA, when possible. The Committee reaffirmed its

support of the work of the task force and encouraged the use of SEEA for the core indicators.

III. Area B. Methodological development for normative standards and other research

11. An important component of the work of the Committee is the advancement of the research agenda of the SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, and the present section describes the progress of methodological development for both. Special attention is paid to SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, which is currently being revised, with finalization expected at the end of 2020. The research agenda of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting is designed to make progress on a number of issues tied to ecosystem extent, ecosystem condition, ecosystem services and valuation. In addition, special attention is paid to several issues of the research agenda that pertain to the SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, to ensure full harmonization between the two.

A. Area B1. SEEA Central Framework

12. Topics relating to the SEEA Central Framework research agenda have been prioritized, and a process has been put in place on how to finalize and publish the results of those research issues. In 2018, three outcome papers were finalized for three topics on the SEEA research agenda: (a) an integrated framework for environmental activity accounts; (b) economy-wide material flow accounts and supply and use tables; and (c) global data structure definitions for data exchange for Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange. The papers were approved by the Committee in June 2018 and have been published on the SEEA website.[4] To ensure that developments in methodology can be executed as expected during compilation, the outcome papers should be considered as recommendations and countries are encouraged to test and experiment with the proposed changes. In addition, with regard to the integrated framework for environmental activity accounts, technical notes for environmental protection expenditure and environmental goods and services sector accounts are currently being developed and take into account the outcome paper, to facilitate testing and experimentation.

13. Furthermore, work was initiated on two more topics: (a) the revision of the classification for environmental activities, including the definition of resource management; and (b) a methodology for fossil fuel subsidies, to be published by UNEP. The London Group on Environmental Accounting discussed those issues at its 24th meeting, held in Dublin in October 2018, and the outcomes of those discussions will be consolidated and published on the SEEA website.

14. With regard to the classification for environmental activities, methodological work is being carried out by Eurostat to clarify borderline cases between environmental protection activities and resource management activities and improve explanatory notes of the current classifications, which are needed for ongoing data collection. That work is expected to pave the way for a methodological analysis

[4] See https://seea.un.org/sites/seea.un.org/files/seea_paper_integrated_framework_estat_v5.pdf, https://seea.un.org/sites/seea.un.org/files/lg23_mfa_seea-cf-research_agenda_paper_femiapaolantoni_rev_rev_0.pdf and https://seea.un.org/sites/seea.un.org/files/lg23_document_global_dsds_estat.pdf.

needed for future integration of the international Classification of Environmental Protection Activities and resource management activities.

15. UNEP completed a draft global economy-wide material flow accounting manual, which aims to expand upon such manuals produced by Eurostat and OECD to provide compilation guidelines fit for purpose for developed and developing countries. The manual was reviewed by the SEEA Central Framework Technical Committee, which recommended that it be submitted for global consultation at the end of 2018. The results of the global consultation will be presented to the Statistics Division in a background document.

16. International statistical standards are revised on a regular basis to take into account new global developments, new user demands and new statistical insights. The SEEA Central Framework must also be reviewed regularly to assess its relevance to understanding the links between the environment and the economy and to policy and analytical requirements. Statistics Netherlands and the Statistics Division will draft a concept note for the 2019 meeting of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting to examine if there is a need to revise the SEEA Central Framework in the light of the ongoing work on the research agenda and the possible upcoming revision of the 2008 SNA. In addition, the Committee is currently liaising with the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts to identify synergies between the SNA and SEEA research agendas. That dialogue will help to coordinate methodological and implementation work and will inform the analysis of whether a SEEA Central Framework revision is needed.

B. Area B1. SEEA Central Framework: measuring the sustainability of tourism

17. As the Statistical Commission recommended in its decision 48/115 (see E/2017/24-E/CN.3/2017/35, chap. I, sect. C), the Committee has continued to collaborate with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Committee on Statistics to develop a statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism, including a technical note linking SEEA and Tourism Satellite Account, which is provided as a background document. The Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting endorsed the technical note during its June 2018 meeting, and the note is currently being tested by developed and developing countries. In addition, members of the Committee and the Statistics Division are part of the working group of experts on measuring the sustainability of tourism, which is leading the work in developing the statistical framework.

18. The statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism is being developed under the auspices of UNWTO, the Committee on Statistics and the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting and is expected to be submitted for approval to the Statistics Division in 2020. The working group of experts on measuring the sustainability of tourism is currently drafting chapters of the statistical framework and has developed a road map for finalization of the framework. The road map includes two rounds of global consultations in 2019 to engage and seek views from the statistical community, the tourism community, academia and the private sector. In addition, an editorial board has been established to provide guidance to the UNWTO Committee on Statistics with regards to the development and finalization of the statistical framework. The editorial board is composed of experts in tourism satellite accounts, tourism statistics, national accounts and environmental-economic accounting, including the Statistics Division and members of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting.

C. Area B2. SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting

19. In the past 12 months, there has been significant progress in the revision process for the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. Under the auspices of the Committee, that work has been coordinated by the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting Technical Committee. Thanks to contributions from Australia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Eurostat, funding for an editor was secured by March 2018. In addition, the Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project workstream on methodology has been aligned with the revision process and provides for important resources through joint global activities. A document on the main purposes of ecosystem accounting is provided as a background paper.

20. Work on the primary research areas is in progress, covering spatial units, ecosystem condition, ecosystem services and valuation and accounting treatments. A note finalizing the list of issues for consideration in the revision process was completed in June 2018. Five working groups have been established to advance work across the research areas. The drafting of a range of discussion papers commenced in mid-2018 and will continue to around March 2019.

21. In particular, the practical experience of countries testing the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting has provided valuable input into the revision process. The Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project workstream on piloting ecosystem accounts is providing important substantive inputs into the revision process through the experiences and lessons learned by Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa. The work of the project will also include compilation guidelines and handbooks on biophysical modelling of ecosystem services and valuation of ecosystem services, which will complement the revision with practical, hands-on guidance.

22. As part of the revision process and the Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project, several events were held over the past 12 months to bring together relevant stakeholders and organizations that have an interest in the revision and bring valuable expertise to the table. In April 2018, an expert meeting on ecosystem valuation was held, funded and organized by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, in collaboration with the Statistics Division and UNEP. In addition, in June 2018, a forum of experts on ecosystem accounting was held in Long Island, United States of America, by the Division in collaboration with UNEP, the World Bank and the European Union, which brought together more than 100 participants from the environmental accounting, environmental economics, biodiversity, geospatial and statistical communities. The revision was also discussed at the 24th meeting of the London Group on Environmental Accounting, held in Dublin in October 2018. The revision will be the focus of several upcoming events, including two more forums of experts (one in 2019 and one in 2020), as well as expert group meetings and the 25th meeting of the London Group on Environmental Accounting.

23. One area of research that has warranted particular consideration is valuation, given its links to SNA. The starting point for valuation in the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting is the use of exchange values as per SNA, which supports integration with standard economic and financial accounts. There is a wide range of techniques available for valuing ecosystem services and assets, and the research programme includes work with experts in that area to determine how those techniques can be best adapted for use in ecosystem accounting in SEEA. Furthermore, consideration should be given to how the SEEA approach complements other ecosystem valuation approaches. In that context, the Statistics Division and the SEEA

Experimental Ecosystem Technical Committee held a webinar on the current state of play on valuation methods for members of the Committee and the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts.

24. Engagement with different stakeholders, while trying to manage expectations, has been a key component in this phase of the revision process of SEEA. Close engagement with various stakeholders ensures that the revision builds on existing scientific, economic and geospatial knowledge in measuring ecosystem extent, condition and services. In particular, efforts have been made to engage with existing initiatives and partnerships, such as the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the Ecosystem Services Partnership and academia.

D. Area B2 SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting: ocean accounting

25. As a result of the increasing demand for ocean statistics, and as requested by the Commission in its decision 49/110, a workstream on ocean accounts has been developed by ESCAP and UNEP, which have engaged international, regional and national stakeholders in an ocean accounts partnership, launched at the first Asia and the Pacific Expert Workshop on Ocean Accounts, held in Bangkok in August 2018, and highlighted at the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference, held in Nairobi in November 2018. Together, ESCAP and UNEP have further developed the concept of ocean accounts as components of SNA and SEEA, plus other information required to monitor and report on Goal 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on life below water, and other ocean-related Goals. That action has resulted in the creation of an informal international coalition working on: (a) refining the concept of ocean accounts; (b) drafting technical recommendations; and (c) conducting national pilot studies to test and implement the concepts. The results of the testing, experimentation and methodological development of ocean accounts will also serve as input in the drafting of the revised SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting conceptual framework.

26. ESCAP has obtained funding from the United Nations Development Account programme to support further methodological development and national pilots to test and implement ocean accounts. As at October 2018, Indonesia, Thailand and Vanuatu have agreed to collaborate on national pilot studies, and pilots will be conducted with at least two other countries. In addition, Canada and South Africa are testing and experimenting with ocean accounts. The results of the methodological development and pilot studies will be documented in a set of technical recommendations before the end of 2019. The technical recommendations will also integrate expertise from relevant communities, including on climate change, disaster risk, biodiversity, economic development and social development. From a methodological viewpoint, it is essential to ensure the work of those communities, as well as those engaged in geospatial data and big data, are aligned with respect to the ocean.

IV. Area C. Development of databases

27. As the Statistical Commission recommended in its decision 47/106 (see E/2016/24-E/CN.3/2016/34, chap. I, sect. B), the Committee is moving forward in the compilation and dissemination of global SEEA-based datasets. The Committee stresses the urgency of developing global databases in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In particular, the Committee has made progress in developing the priority datasets of air emission, energy, economy-wide material flow and land accounts. More work is needed for water accounts, both to facilitate the

compilation of those accounts by countries and to develop estimation techniques. To disseminate current efforts, the Committee has discussed the compilation of existing databases and national data, to be hosted on the Statistics Division's SEEA website.

28. The basic strategy for compiling global SEEA databases is to use nationally available data according to the SEEA Central Framework when they exist and to supplement those data with estimates based on internationally available data sources whenever possible. International organizations have started to develop estimation techniques to populate global SEEA databases in cases where national data are not available. It should be noted, however, that high-quality environmental and economic statistics are needed for those estimation techniques to work well, and estimated SEEA accounts cannot be considered as a substitute for those statistics. As the Commission recommended, the Committee recognizes the need for communication with countries before dissemination and for transparency regarding estimation techniques. Furthermore, estimated data should always be flagged and distinguished and separated from official statistics.

29. At its 13th meeting, held in June 2018, the Committee of Experts endorsed the OECD methodology for estimating SEEA air emission accounts for Annex I States parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, following the advice of the SEEA Central Framework Technical Committee. For Annex I parties that do not yet compile official air emission accounts, the corresponding estimates will be released as OECD estimates. The possibility to estimate air emission accounts for non-Annex I parties is currently being investigated.

30. With respect to energy accounts, the Committee noted the progress made by the Statistics Division for the development of an Excel-based tool to estimate physical supply and use accounts. The tool is currently being tested with pilot countries and will then be reviewed by the SEEA Technical Committee and submitted to the Committee for endorsement. E-learning and workshops are planned for 2019 to assist countries in the development of energy accounts.

31. Furthermore, UNEP and the International Resource Panel have undertaken work to update the global material flow database. The global economy-wide material flow accounting manual will further pave the way for an international dataset on economy-wide material flow accounts aligned with SEEA. It is complemented with work undertaken by OECD, in cooperation with Eurostat and UNEP, to develop a harmonized international measurement method for estimating demand-based material flows (material footprints) and establishing related accounts.

32. The Committee also noted the publication by FAO of land cover accounts with a global coverage. Those accounts are estimated based on satellite images and rely on the SEEA land cover classification. The SEEA Central Framework Technical Committee will review the underlying methodology.

33. In order to facilitate data transmission, a technical group with representatives from international organizations (Eurostat, FAO, OECD, UNEP and the Statistics Division) has developed Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange definitions for data structure, and the accompanying documentation for the following SEEA accounts: air emissions, energy, material flows, land and water. Those definitions underwent a global public review from May to June 2018. At the time of drafting the present report, a second pilot phase was under way, with the objective of finalizing the definitions in February 2019. Publication of the final package for all SEEA data structure definitions together with the 2019 annual release of the macroeconomic statistics data structure definitions is planned for April or May 2019.

34. To ensure that progress is also made on the priority database of water, OECD, in collaboration with the Statistics Division, UNEP and Eurostat, will prepare a

scoping and discussion paper on the linkages between SEEA accounts and the water-related indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals for the 2019 meeting of the Committee. The custodian agencies for water-related indicators of the Goals will be consulted beforehand to ensure that the water accounts can feed into Goals-related monitoring processes.

35. At its next meeting, the Committee will discuss a road map for how to disseminate existing SEEA databases (from Eurostat and OECD), official national SEEA statistics and, eventually, estimated SEEA accounts through the SEEA website. That road map will include a process for communicating with countries before disseminating official statistics and national estimates as well as communicating estimation techniques and estimated data.

36. The Committee is also collaborating with the Global Working Group on Big Data to explore the possibility of developing global databases on ecosystem extent. In particular, that work will support SEEA-relevant Sustainable Development Goals indicators under Goal 6, on clean water and sanitation, and Goal 15, on life on land.

V. Area D. Implementation and statistical capacity-building

37. The Statistics Division has built and maintained an up-to-date database on countries implementing SEEA accounts. According to information from regional commissions, international organizations and countries, more than 80 countries have compiled SEEA Central Framework accounts and more than 30 countries have compiled SEEA Experimental Ecosystem accounts. However, in order to reach the implementation targets of having at least 100 countries with SEEA Central Framework programmes and at least 50 countries with SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting programmes by 2020, as set out in decision 47/106 (see E/2016/24-E/CN.3/2016/34, chap. I, sect. B), more work needs to be done in terms of statistical capacity-building. In that context, Statistics South Africa conducted additional analysis using the results of the 2017 Global Assessment and the Statistics Division's database and presented it to the Committee in June 2018. The analysis looked at gaps in the compilation of the accounts across countries and indicated that water and energy were the most popular modules being planned for compilation, particularly for developing countries. The analysis also included maps that showed which countries were planning the compilation of certain accounts and which countries had already compiled those accounts, in order to foster regional collaboration and cooperation.

38. The 2017 Global Assessment also identified inadequate funding as a main impeding factor in implementing the accounts. However, a new opportunity for funding SEEA accounts comes from the Global Environmental Facility, the world's largest single source of environmental finance. The Facility was established to support countries tackle environmental problems and includes natural capital and environmental accounting as one of its priorities in its latest round of investments, known as Global Environmental Facility 7. This represents a significant opportunity to increase the development and implementation of SEEA accounts worldwide and reach the implementation targets.

39. Statistics South Africa will draft a proposed road map for the revision and administration of the 2020 Global Assessment of Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics, to be presented at the June 2019 meeting of the Committee. The revised Assessment will be presented to the Committee in 2020 and administered before the end of 2020. The results of the Assessment will then be presented to the Commission in 2021.

40. Several initiatives of regional commissions and international agencies have been carried out over the past year, during which many activities been the product of collaboration among multiple agencies and regional commissions and were funded by the tenth tranche of the United Nations Development Account programme. Several initiatives and events for the upcoming year will continue to support SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting implementation in countries. For instance, the next OECD-ECE seminar on the implementation of SEEA, to be held in Geneva in February 2019, will aim to identify countries' priorities, needs and progress in the context of implementation. The international coordination survey provides further details of the activities of OECD and ECE on SEEA, and is provided as a background document.

41. The World Bank Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services programme, which is also focused on building capacity for the development of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, currently includes the provision of training, workshops and support for institutionalizing SEEA in Botswana, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Indonesia, Madagascar, the Philippines, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia. The programme also funds projects implementing local ecosystem accounts in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam.

42. The Statistics Division and regional commissions have continued to form partnerships to deliver blended learning initiatives, which have seen broad participation from national statistical offices and line ministries alike. In the first half of 2018, the Statistics Division collaborated with ECE and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia to administer online courses on the SEEA Central Framework as well as in-person workshops in Minsk and Amman, respectively.

43. In the second half of 2018, the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting course was translated into Spanish, for use in a blended learning initiative under the Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project. As part of that initiative, an in-person workshop was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in November 2018, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

44. The Statistics Division also finalized and made available e-learning courses in water and energy in 2018. The current suite of available e-learning courses, which is freely available as self-paced learning modules, includes:[5]

(a) An introduction to the SEEA Central Framework (available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish);

(b) An introduction to SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (available in English and Spanish);

(c) In-depth training on SEEA-Energy Accounting (available in English);

(d) In-depth training on SEEA-Water Accounting (available in English);

In addition, the SEEA-Energy e-learning course is currently being translated into Russian, to be used in a blended learning initiative in the first half of 2019.

VI. Area E. Formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues

45. At its forty-eighth session, the Statistical Commission encouraged the Committee to develop materials in support of the promotion of SEEA, particularly

[5] E-Learning on the SEEA is available at https://elearning-cms.unstats.un.org/.

material highlighting its usefulness for policy formulation and evaluation. While SEEA is a statistical framework, it supports analytical and policy frameworks in support of integrated policy decision-making. Highlighting the policy applications of SEEA is key to ensuring that SEEA accounts are used for integrated policymaking and that SEEA remains a demand-driven statistical framework.

A. Communications tools

46. The Committee's website has been its main vehicle to reach stakeholders, civil service and the general public. Through the Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project, the website has been consistently expanded and updated to include the latest updates and news on SEEA implementation, country case studies, methodological updates and policy applications. To further facilitate ease of use, the Statistics Division will adjust the organization of the site, making it easier for new and experienced users to find what they are looking for.

47. To support uptake and policy applications of SEEA, the "News & Notes" quarterly newsletter is sent to Committee members, SEEA contacts and other subscribers. In order to appeal to multiple audiences, the newsletter reports on a variety of topics, including SEEA implementation in developed and developing countries, updates on the Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project, case studies of successful SEEA implementation, methodological updates and links to policy. In addition, each quarter, members of the Committee inform the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Statistics Division of upcoming events and recent publications for inclusion in the newsletter. To broaden the audience base and attract new readers, the newsletter has been mentioned and promoted in the newsletters of non-governmental organizations active in natural capital accounting. The Statistics Division will continue to look for opportunities to cross-promote the newsletter, in order to engage with the broad base of SEEA stakeholders.

48. The Committee has also focused on using social media to inform stakeholders of SEEA activities, developments and key milestones. At its June 2018 management meeting, the Committee included a hands-on session on the use of Twitter and focused on crafting targeted messaging to stakeholders. The Committee has used Twitter to inform its members, as well as external stakeholders, of recent accomplishments and topical applications of SEEA.

B. Addressing emerging policy issues

49. In its effort to develop materials in support of the policy applications of SEEA, the Statistics Division has begun to work on a series of policy issues papers, with funding from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH. The papers will be designed to appeal to policymakers and analysts and will explore how SEEA can be used as an analytical framework to address specific policy questions. An overview document will accompany the specific issues papers, and the drafting process will be overseen by an editorial board, which will include of members of the Committee, among others. Taken together, the documents will serve as a fourth publication, complementing SEEA Central Framework, SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting and SEEA Applications and Extensions. Furthermore, to promote engagement with line ministries, policy analysts and policymakers, the issues papers will serve as the basis for the development of e-learning modules on the policy applications of SEEA.

50. As an intergovernmental body, the Committee has an important role to play in ensuring that statistical advances are taken into consideration in the monitoring

processes of various policy frameworks. The third Forum on Natural Capital Accounting for Better Policy, held in Paris in November 2018, focused on how natural capital accounting can be applied to policies in support of biodiversity and climate change. The Forum, organized by the World Bank Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services programme, the Statistics Division, the Government of the Netherlands and the Natural Capital Coalition, brought together national statistical offices, line ministries, business and other sectors to discuss how natural capital accounting and SEEA, as an integrated framework, can be applied to measure progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the post-2020 biodiversity framework, the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants also discussed a strategy to ensure that natural capital accounting is mainstreamed into global agendas, in particular for the post-2020 biodiversity framework and the 2020 review of the Paris Agreement.

VII. Points for discussion

51. **The Statistical Commission is invited to express its views on:**

(a) **The proposed activities to enhance coordination and prevent overlaps in the development of methodologies and capacity-building on SEEA and supporting statistics (see sect. II);**

(b) **The proposed activities and process for promoting SEEA for the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, where appropriate (see sect. II);**

(c) **The activities taken to mainstream SEEA in the areas of climate change and biodiversity (see sect. II);**

(d) **The proposed process to understand the need for a revision of the SEEA Central Framework (see sect. III);**

(e) **The finalization and adoption of the global economy-wide material flow accounting manual, to be used as compilation guidelines to guide countries in developing economy-wide material flow accounts (see sect. III);**

(f) **The progress made on the statistical framework on measuring the sustainability of tourism and the proposed process to advance the development of the framework (see sect. III);**

(g) **The revision process of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (see sect. III);**

(h) **The process for moving towards global databases, including the dissemination of existing datasets using the Statistics Division's SEEA website as a platform (see sect. IV);**

(i) **The strategy towards the 2020 implementation targets, focused on e-learning, face-to-face hands-on workshops and country technical support (see sect. V);**

(j) **The proposed activities for communicating SEEA and addressing emerging policy issues (see sect. VI).**